Seminar Project Guidelines[1]

Due: Wednesday, December 12th with all components submitted to the dropbox by 8 pm.

The seminar project is one that you will conceive, design, and execute (individually or with a partner); it should be original, innovative work that combines your personal, academic, and/or professional interests while showcasing your critical/creative skills and strengths. Your project should demonstrate a depth of learning and engagement with the seminar topic of "Posthuman Futures" and within the specific contexts of literary studies and environmental humanities. The project is designed to inspire you to be creative and innovative, and you'll be rewarded for hard work and ingenuity. However, although the project is an unusually open-ended assignment, that doesn't necessarily mean that you can pursue any project. The general guidelines for the project are as follows, and I suggest that you return to this list frequently.

Your project must:
- Be clearly related to the course topic, and it should thus directly engage assigned readings (or at least indirectly build on themes or issues found within the texts) and reflect the influence of class activities and discussions. You need not address every single reading assigned in the course, nor every point made in discussions, but part of the purpose of the project is to assess your comprehension and achievement of the course content and any related theories or disciplinary practices. In order to do that, your project must make clear and consistent reference to the materials assigned for this class and demonstrate your ability to draw on classroom discussions and activities.
- Be substantial. It should represent a serious investment of time, thought, and effort. Your project should not be incomplete, sloppy, or look like it was undertaken the weekend before it was due but reflect hours of planning, work, and refinement. This course does not require the formal writing assignments and exams that are traditional in college courses of its level; the time spent on developing or studying for these traditional components of a college course should be clearly transferred to work on your project.
- Demonstrate independent research. Whatever project you undertake, you will need to do research. This research might take many different forms and be used for a variety of purposes. Your project should not just be something that you invented out of thin air but rather should reflect how your sustained thinking around your project has drawn on the reliable work of others who have thought about the same things as you.
- Be innovative. Your project should be a genuinely new way of representing, thinking, or engaging with the course topic and the assigned texts (which is one of the reasons why you have to do some research). You'll especially want to avoid picking a project that has already been done, or one likely to be undertaken by another student in the class.

---

[1] Project guidelines, proposal form, and rubric are adapted from an undergraduate course on climate fiction taught by Dr. Crystal Lake and have been revised for this class with her kind permission.

Project Suggestions

Your project might take a lot of different forms, and even if you decide to write a more "traditional" seminar paper, you should on some level try to engage with new media and digital technologies. These tools are often utilized in environmental humanities and evident in the growing trend of approaching literary studies by engaging digital objects and/or visual components. The following is just a list of possible ideas to get you thinking about how you might approach your project; you may use or adapt any one or more of the following suggestions:

- create a comprehensive map of locations or spatial descriptions in the novels and link these to various environmental or ecological concerns (both fictional and real-world);
- create an online exhibit or reference site of various real-world databases and reports on a specific climate topic or issue explored in the texts (both fiction and theory);
- take a series of photographs and pair them with passages from assigned readings, or, make a movie, documentary, or a series of podcasts connected to literary passages—as a creative product or pedagogical approach;
- incorporate work from another course into this course and write a long paper about the relationships, for example, between literature, climate, and economic/colonial history or problems of globalization; literature, activism, and digital pedagogies; literature, visual arts, and environmental justice;
- write a series of blog posts or tweets that connect characters to their environments and draw on the work of new materialists;
- use the 3-D printer to make a board game based on one of the novels, or, build an app that chooses passages from the readings to display based on the day's weather forecast;
- undertake a series of statistical analyses and data visualizations of word frequencies or densities that relate to the various environments and themes in the novels we've read.

The options are nearly endless, and you should draw on the resources the university offers for researching and creating your project. Use your peers to explore and brainstorm ideas. Team up with a partner and create a multi-part or mixed-media project—if you do decide to work in a pair, keep in mind you will earn the same grade for your project and presentation, but will need to write a separate reflection/research essay.

Proposal, Reflection Essay, and Presentation

By Sunday, Oct 21st (end of Week 8) you will need to complete and submit the project proposal form so that you can get further feedback and advice about your planned project (subsequent to our initial meeting by the end of Week 4). It doesn't hurt to start thinking about this form now, available in Pilot. You can use this form as a draft for the reflection/research essay, which should be 18-25 pages (approx. 6,000-9,000 words) and describe in detail your project, the processes you used to research and create it, and explain why and how the project is significant (or, unique and innovative). Your presentation will incorporate images relevant to your project—ideally, you should present the completed project itself if easily viewed online—and also include a description of your project and a statement of your project's significance. Both your description and statement of significance can be summarized from the reflection essay.

Grading Criteria
The proposal and presentation are worth 50 points each and are graded based on completion, coherency, and preparation. The reflection essay is worth 100 points and graded according to the general criteria for writing assignments outlined in the syllabus. The finalized project is worth up to 300 points and assessed according to the following criteria:

A (300 pts): The project is excellent and innovative. It demonstrates a high-degree of work and professionalism that suggest the project was developed and refined over many weeks leading up to the deadline for its submission. The project is clearly related to the assigned texts and course topics and it offers a compelling, persuasive response to the questions with which the class was engaged throughout the semester. It demonstrates reliable and relevant research conducted by the student. The project's quality and significance are also evident in the presentation and in the reflection essay (NB: a project is considered incomplete without these two components).

B (255 pts): The project is strong and demonstrates a professionalism that suggests the project was developed and refined over several weeks leading up to the deadline for its submission. The project is clearly related to the assigned texts and course topics, and it offers a thoughtful response to the questions with which the class was engaged throughout the semester. It demonstrates reliable and relevant research conducted by the student. The project's quality and significance are also evident in the presentation and in the reflection essay.

C (210 pts): The project is completed but would benefit from more work, development, and refinement. The project may have been too hastily undertaken too close to the deadline. The project is clearly related to the assigned texts and course topics, but its response to the questions with which the class was engaged throughout the semester is incomplete or inconsistent. The project demonstrates some research conducted by the student, but this research may not be as reliable and relevant as that demonstrated by B projects. The project's quality and significance are also evident in the presentation and in the reflection essay, but at least one or more of the project components would have benefited from more effort and revision.

D (180 pts): The project would clearly benefit from more work, development, and refinement. And/or the project's relationship to the course topic and assigned texts is unclear or haphazard, suggesting that the student hasn't completed or comprehended the work assigned in the class at multiple points in the semester. The project would also benefit from more research on the part of the student. Although the presentation and the reflection essay are both turned in, they similarly demonstrate the need for the project to have undergone more development and effort.

F (150 pts or less): The project is missing either the presentation or the reflection essay; or, the project fails to adhere to Wright State's standards of academic integrity.